

Part IV - SITE MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Planning Elements and Recommendations

Given the likelihood of a greatly increased number of users, this Park will need well-defined entry points and trail corridors to protect its natural systems. A low-impact four-foot wide trail can be planned in the southern-to-central portion of the site with few constraints and can be built by volunteers guided by King County Parks staff. In this area a route can follow existing trails, although a new segment along the upper contours from the Central Park parking area to the ridge is recommended. The new segment will have to meet USFS standards and will have to be built in a way that promotes good drainage and prevents erosion. A loop around the central ridge is recommended because it would ensure that visitors can return to their starting points along an approved trial route. Consideration should be given to seasonal use of all trails in order to protect sensitive soils and prevent erosion along the site's steep hillsides.

Site Improvements

Some existing trails on the property have been discontinued because of development on Issaquah Highlands property. Old trail segments that connected with these discontinued portions should be blocked and planted with native vegetation to prevent their further use. Where existing trails along the southern property edge show evidence of erosion, reconstruction should take place and/or new trails created in more appropriate locations. The trail passing into the former Black Nugget Ranch should be discontinued in the vicinity of the property line and replanted by the King County Parks staff with assistance from volunteers and stakeholders.

An effort should be made by Parks staff, along with volunteers, to assure recruitment of large downed logs in wetland areas to maintain amphibian habitat. To encourage diversity of wildlife, the addition of young conifers will provide effective thermal cover for larger mammals and by planting mid-story trees and shrubs such as huckleberry, salmonberry, and elderberry, more forage will be provided for the site's large and small animals. A forest management plan will be created in conjunction with management plans for the McCormick/Mitchell Hill lands to the east.

Of great importance will be the treatment of the western edge of the site, where it borders the Issaquah Highlands development, and enforcing boundary lines to reduce illegal encroachments and dumping should be stressed. Removal of native vegetation and exposure of soil during the construction of this development could result in erosion and native vegetation near the clearing limits may be vulnerable to increased exposure to the elements (sun and wind). King County staff will monitor this edge in conjunction with City of Issaquah staff to assure that contractors comply with standards set in the Issaquah Highlands' TЕСP and to watch for the presence of "danger trees" that may require removal. Many of the landscaped portions of the developed areas of Issaquah Highlands will likely be planted with non-native species. Each of these conditions increases the risk of encroachment by invasive plant species into the Park and monitoring/maintenance will be required.

Pets will also have access into the Grand Ridge site from this development. King County Parks staff will work with volunteer user groups to monitor for the presence of small animals from this community. Signs will be posted at all entry points that pets in the Park must be kept on leashes. Warnings regarding the presence of wildlife should be posted.

Coordination with Other Agencies

Coordination with King County DNR will be important with regard to connections into the McCormick/Mitchell Hill property. Areas important for wildlife will require special consideration of habitat and migration corridors. If trails are to be continuous throughout these forested parcels to the east, they will have to be designed to compatible standards and coordinated with King County trails. Working with DNR staff, King

County Parks staff will establish forest management practices. The intent will be to maintain biodiversity and to maintain the healthy vegetation that controls runoff, maintains water temperature in streams, prevents erosion, and contributes to downstream water quality.

Coordination with Issaquah Highlands staff and City of Issaquah Parks Department staff will play an important part in overall planning and maintenance of the Park, especially along the edges of new development. Where the proposed trail meets a connection point with the Issaquah Highlands development, site conditions should be monitored for any misuse or degradation. Specific details related to public access along the water tower access road should be spelled out, especially with regard to parking, trail etiquette, and pets on leashes.

Communication will be established with WSDOT with regard to Park visitors' use of the High Point parking lot and any future expansion of parking in that area.